

Franciscus Patricius, *Discussionum peripateticarum tomus primus* / Frane Petrić, *Peripatetičke rasprave. Svezak prvi*, ed. by Erna Banić-Pajnić, Luka Boršić, Mihaela Girardi-Karšulin, Filip Grgić (Zagreb: Institut za filozofiju, 2021), 3 vols.*

With the Croatian translation, in 2021, of the first part of Francesco Patrizi's *Discussiones Peripateticae* – originally published separately in Venice in 1571 and later reproduced in the expanded Basel edition of 1581 – the Institute of Philosophy in Zagreb has completed a more than decade-long work of transcription, translation, and commentary of this important and intricate text, which was recently presented by Craig Martin as “one of the most sustained critiques of Aristotelian natural philosophy of the sixteenth century and one of the most philologically sophisticated of human history”.¹

This enterprise has been carried out by a team of historians of philosophy and scholars well-versed in Renaissance philosophy and in the thought of Patrizi which includes Erna Banić-Pajnić, Luka Boršić, Mihaela Girardi-Karšulin, and Filip Grgić; the impulse came from a research project on the philosophy of Patrizi and Federico Grisogono started in 2007 and led by Girardi-Karšulin. Between 2009 and 2013, also thanks to the work of Tomislav Čepulić, Ivica Martinović, and Olga Perić, the second, third, and fourth parts (*tomi*) of the *Discussiones* were published.² It is to be noted that in 2015, Banić-Pajnić, Girardi-Karšulin, Grgić, and Ivana Skuhala Karasman have also published significant sections of Patrizi's *Nova de universis philosophia* (1591), also printed by the Institute.³

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¹ Craig Martin, *Subverting Aristotle. Religion, History, and Philosophy in Early Modern Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 113.

² Franciscus Patricius, *Discussionum peripateticarum tomus tertius* / Frane Petrić, *Peripatetičke rasprave. Svezak treći*, ed. by Tomislav Čepulić, Mihaela Girardi-Karšulin (Zagreb: Institut za filozofiju, 2009). Franciscus Patricius, *Discussionum peripateticarum tomus quartus* / Frane Petrić, *Peripatetičke rasprave. Svezak četvrti*, ed. by Mihaela Girardi-Karšulin, Ivica Martinović, Olga Perić (Zagreb: Institut za filozofiju, 2012), 2 vols. Franciscus Patricius, *Discussionum peripateticarum tomus secundus* / Frane Petrić, *Peripatetičke rasprave. Svezak drugi*, ed. by Erna Banić-Pajnić, Luka Boršić, Mihaela Girardi-Karšulin (Zagreb: Institut za filozofiju, 2013), 2 vols.

³ Frane Petrić, *Nova de universis philosophia* (excerpts), u *Hrvatska filozofija od 12. do*



Now, the time has finally come for the *tomus primus* of the *Discussiones*, the lengthiest of the four (divided into 13 books), which has been published in three separate volumes (vol. 1: books I–IV; vol. 2: books V–IX; vol. 3: books X–XIII), edited by Banić-Pajnić, Boršić, Grgić, and Girardi-Karšulin, who was also in charge of the Croatian translation. Dora Ivanišević and Olga Perić have contributed to the editing of the Latin text, while Damir Salopek has done the transcription. Skuhala Karasman has provided a select bibliography. This part of the *Discussiones*, famously discussed in detail by Maria Muccillo⁴ in a pioneering study, contains a painstaking historical-philological reconstruction of the life of Aristotle and a critical assessment of the authenticity of his works. As Boršić explains in the preface (vol. 1, p. VII), this has been the last part to be translated because, in the previous years, the focus of the scholars had been primarily on the theoretical sections of the work rather than on the historical ones.

It must be emphasized that this is not a critical edition, which was expressly not the goal of the editors; however, it could certainly be seen as a first step in that direction. In any case, this is so far the only complete transcription and translation of the work. The editors have reproduced and edited the text of the Basel edition (1581) and have highlighted the differences with the Venetian edition (1571) only when the text appeared unclear or presented significant changes with respect to the previous version. Patrizi's many direct quotes from Greek ancient sources have been moved to the footnotes, and their Croatian translation follows Patrizi's own Latin translation (which he always provided). The editors have also identified all the Greek sources and indicated where Patrizi's version differs from modern editions; the reader, however, won't find references to the actual editions of ancient texts possibly utilized by Patrizi. At the end of the third volume, the editors have included a set of tools that will certainly prove useful to scholars: an index of names, an index of the Greek quotes and sources, and a select bibliography; at the very end, there is also a reproduction of the index of names, the *errata*, and the subject index as published in the Basel edition (whose page references, unavoidably, do not correspond to those of the present edition).

The translation of Patrizi's text is preceded by four separate essays (in Croatian) written by the editors, which I will briefly summarize. In "Francesco Patrizi and Aristotelianism" (vo. 1, pp. XI–XLII), Erna Banić-Pajnić, after some

19. stoljeća. *Izbor iz djela na latinskome*, ed. by Erna Banić-Pajnić, Mihaela Girardi-Karšulin, Filip Grgić, Ivana Skuhala Karasman (Zagreb: Institut za filozofiju, 2015), vol. 2, pp. 86–169.

⁴ Maria Muccillo, "La vita e le opere di Aristotele nelle *Discussiones peripateticæ* di Francesco Patrizi da Cherso," *Rinascimento* 21 (1981), pp. 53–119.

introductory remarks about the historical significance and originality of “Renaissance Aristotelianism”, proceeds to examine Patrizi’s “paradoxical” place within it: Patrizi was the “fiercest” critic of Aristotle’s philosophy and, at the same time, the most dedicated to identifying an authentic corpus of Aristotelian works (p. XVII). By questioning – through a meticulous historical and philological analysis – the originality of Aristotle’s doctrines and the authenticity of many of his works, Patrizi wanted to overthrow the authority of both Aristotle and the entire tradition of his interpreters. This was, in turn, part of a much more ambitious cultural project, laid out in his *Nova de universis philosophia* (1591) – to replace Aristotle’s philosophy as it was taught in the universities with a “pious philosophy” grounded on a newly systematized *prisca theologia*. Banić-Pajnić also insists on Patrizi’s debt toward humanist philology and its critical approach to ancient texts, and on the fact that his historical analysis, however critical, highlighted the richness and variety of the Aristotelian tradition and represented a decisive contribution to the history of philosophy as a discipline, especially because it emphasized the historically-conditioned nature of every interpretation.

In “Francesco Patrizi and the *Corpus Aristotelicum*” (pp. XLIII–XL), Filip Grgić focuses on books 2–9 of the first part of the *Discussiones*, which contain Patrizi’s discussion of the authenticity, structure, and order of the works traditionally attributed to Aristotle. Among all the works of the Aristotelian corpus analyzed by Patrizi, Grgić selects two cases: *Metaphysics* and the three ethical treatises (*Nicomachean Ethics*, *Eudemian Ethics*, and *Magna Moralia*). While Patrizi’s treatment of the ethical writings is judged “too harsh” by today’s standards (p. LVIII) – he considered only the *Magna Moralia* as authentic – his discussion of *Metaphysics* highlights, for Grgić, some still-relevant “fundamental dilemmas” (p. LIV) that have to do both with the structure of the text and the historical role of metaphysics as a discipline. In conclusion, Grgić notes that, overall, the question of authenticity was only of relative importance for Patrizi, for he thought that what was valuable and true in Aristotle’s writings had been plagiarized from his predecessors, while what Aristotle himself contributed was “fundamentally worthless and untrue” (p. LX).

In “Patrizi’s interpretation of the subject of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* as a precondition for his critique of Aristotle” (pp. LXI–LXIX), Mihaela Girardi-Karšulin argues that Patrizi’s historical and philological analysis as conducted in the first part of the *Discussiones* also contained relevant philosophical assumptions surrounding Aristotle’s metaphysical doctrines, assumptions that Patrizi would make explicit in the following sections of the *Discussiones*. His main assumption, for Girardi-Karšulin, was that Aristotle’s idea of a unity between

the “science of being” and the “science of the first principles” or “theology” was unfounded because built on a notion of being incompatible with the only framework that could make such unity possible – namely the Pythagorean, Parmenidean and Platonic framework, whose object was “true being” as that which is ideal, eternal, foundational and necessary (while for Aristotle, according to this view, being was simply that which is “most general”, abstracted from all individual beings). The epistemological implications of this misguided view are summarized by Patrizi in his marginalia: Aristotle mistook for science what for Plato was mere opinion (*Opinio Platonica – Aristotelis scientia*). For Girardi-Karšulin, Patrizi’s critical assessment of the shortcomings of Aristotle’s “science of being” would play a decisive role also in his critique of Aristotle’s philosophy in the *Nova de universis philosophia*.

In his note on “The frontispiece of the 1571 edition of the *Discussiones Peripateticae*”, Luka Boršić draws attention to the fact that both the title and the cover page of the first edition differ considerably from those of the second. The mysterious symbolism of the emblem that appears in the first edition, which Boršić analyzes in detail, seems to combine a number of allusions to both Patrizi’s personal situation and to Christian and Chaldean themes. As testified by some of his letters, already at the time of the composition of the first part of the *Discussiones*, Patrizi was busy collecting “mystical” books about the “true wisdom” that long predated Aristotle and his interpreters (who actually are accused of having perverted it). It is from the rediscovery and reorganization of such *ancestral* wisdom that – paradoxically enough – a “new” philosophy would grow, finally subverting the dominance of the Aristotelian tradition, an aspiration that Patrizi had been cultivating since the 1560s and which would find its most mature expression in his *Nova de universis philosophia*.

Together with the edition of the other parts of the *Discussiones* previously published by the Institute of Philosophy, this one will no doubt prove to be a useful research tool for scholars of Patrizi and Renaissance culture. It will also alleviate, to some extent, the job of those who may choose to embark in a critical edition of the work. In addition, the Croatian translation will render the text finally accessible in its entirety to university students in the region and to educated readers. Instead of flagging typos or minor imprecisions, I would rather add something to the discussion by stressing that Patrizi’s historical-philological critique of Aristotle and Aristotelianism is no less relevant and fraught with profound philosophical implications for the development of European culture than his speculative attacks on some of the most entrenched physical, cosmological, and metaphysical doctrines typical of Aristotelianism.

The vehemence and meticulousness of his textual critique is easier to understand if placed against the background of long-lasting, larger cultural trends. As Luca Bianchi has remarked in an illuminating essay,⁵ the astonishing proliferation of Aristotelian literature from the half of the 15th century on, fostered by the printing press, proved to be both a strong and a weak point of Renaissance Aristotelianism, which eventually (partially) collapsed because of its expansion and “hermeneutical hypertrophy” rather than its “senescence”. The deluge of critical editions of Aristotle’s works, multilingual translations, new commentaries, vulgarizations, and new editions of the Hellenistic, Byzantine, Arabic, and scholastic commentaries had long-lasting consequences. From an elaborate technique of textual criticism, enthusiastically cultivated in the hope of resurrecting the Aristotelian text (and the ancients’ texts in general) in its original purity, philology grew to become a form of historical knowledge, with all the advantages but also uncertainties that this entails. The unmasking of the Aristotelian apocrypha, the unearthing of the many conflicting *lectiones* of the same text, together with the availability, for the first time, of the *entire* Aristotelian tradition in its disorienting hermeneutical intricacy, gradually led to the awareness of the *conventionality* of the philologically-reconstructed text and the inescapable *plurality* of its possible interpretations.

Since the authenticity of *all* the works of Aristotle can be somehow called in doubt, Patrizi claimed in the *Discussiones*, then “we can safely argue that Aristotle’s philosophy *does not exist*” (vol. 1, p. 154, my italics). This “iconoclastic assumption”⁶ was certainly connected to Patrizi’s cultural and pedagogical project, that is, replacing Aristotelianism with a Platonic-Christian *pia philosophia*, so that “Aristotle’s ghost could be laid to rest, and Plato would carry the day”.⁷ However, the radical textual skepticism on which it was grounded also shows what kind of extreme and destructive conclusions could be drawn from the problems and the questions raised by more than a century of humanist philology, whose tools had become powerful weapons in the hands of anti-Aristotelians such as Mario Nizolio, Gian Francesco Pico, and Patrizi himself.

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⁵ Luca Bianchi, “Una caduta senza declino? Considerazioni sulla crisi dell’aristotelismo fra Rinascimento ed età moderna” (1995), in L. Bianchi, *Studi sull’aristotelismo del Rinascimento* (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2003).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁷ Luc Deiz, “Do We Have Any Genuine Works by Aristotle? Francesco Patrizi da Cherso’s Discussion of the *corpus Aristotelicum*”, *Intellectual History Review* 29 (2019) 4, pp. 545–560.

